

*The faithful Servant looking out for the
Joy of his LORD.*

A
S E R M O N

Occasion'd by the

D E A T H

O F T H E

Reverend *George Braithwaite*, A.M.

P R E A C H ' D at

DEVONSHIRE-SQUARE,

On JULY the 24th, 1748.

Publiſh'd at the Request of the Congregation.

By *SAMUEL WILSON*.

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Printed for J. WARD at the *King's-Arms* in
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W. Musgrave.

S E R M O N

D E F T H



DEMONSTRATION

By SAMUEL WILSON

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Printed for J. Ward at the King's Arms in
St. Pauls Church-Yard; and G. Kearsley at
Clarendon in Cornhill. MDCCLXXIII.

At the particular request of your late valuable Pastor, I am to engage your meditations on that portion of sacred writ, which you will find in the

2^d Epistle to TIM. Chap. the ivth, the 7th and 8th Verses.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

I PERSUADE myself, that every one, who was acquainted with the remarkable modesty and humility of the Reverend Mr. George Braithwaite deceas'd; will readily acquit him of the charge of vanity, in the choice of these words as the subject of his funeral discourse.

I SHALL not easily forget the serious and very affectionate manner in which, a little be-

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fore his death, he spoke to me upon this head:

“ My dear brother, said he, (for that was the manner of the good man, always warm and pathetic) “ I have nothing to boast of, far be
“ it from me; but, I bless my God, he has
“ through his grace enabled me, in a measure,
“ to be faithful. And I look on it as a singular
“ mercy, that I have not to charge myself
“ with a single instance, in which I have been
“ left to baulk my conscience, as to any one
“ truth of the gospel, or ordinance of Christ,
“ out of fear, or in favour of any man.”

GLORIOUS mercy! To have in the view of eternity the testimony of a *good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, he had his conversation in this world*; and at the same time to see his obligations to a higher hand, and thankfully to acknowledge, that by the grace of God he was what he was.

If we attend to the connection of the words, we must look back to the beginning of the chapter, where the apostle solemnly charges *Timothy*, his beloved son in the faith, as he would answer it to God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom; that he took care to fulfil his ministry, to *preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.*

AND

AND this the rather, as the time was at hand when the enemy would sow his tares, and men of corrupt minds grow weary of *sound doctrine*, and heap to themselves, *after their own lusts*, teachers, having itching ears, turning away their ears from the truth, and turning unto fables.

HERE we may observe, by the way, that the chief spring of the opposition which is made to the gospel is the *lusts* of men. It is too humbling, or too holy for them to submit to. Nor are we to wonder, that teachers who sooth the pride, and palliate the vices of human nature, have their followers and admirers. But, alas! the end is delusion and destruction; they *turn into fables*.—But, says the apostle to Timothy, *Watch thou in all things*; keep an eye, as the Lord shall help thee, on thy heart; the principles and ends of thy conduct, the manner of thy behaviour. Narrowly watch, lest the enemy gain an advantage. *Endure afflictions*; look for them, if thou art faithful, expect reproach and persecution; and remember, thou art not to flinch because of opposition or danger. *Make full proof of, or fulfil thy ministry*. Let no part lie neglected; do nothing in a careless, negligent manner; be *servent in spirit*, serving the Lord; and labour to recommend thyself to God, and the consciences of men.

AND that this advice might have the greater weight, and make the deeper impresson on

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Timothy, who doubtless lov'd the apostle as his father and instructor; he chuses to speak to him as a dying man; for, says he, *I am now ready to be offer'd, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

THIS was to be the last admonition; after this *Timothy* would have no opportunity to consult or advise with him any more. A very affecting consideration! especially to those who know the mercy of godly, wise, affectionate relations or friends. Who would not hear them at any time? But what sort of attention is due to their dying language?

THE apostle was now looking into eternity: possibly he might be assured by a *special* revelation, as well as from his age and imprisonment, *that the time of his departure was at hand.* Whatever was the spring of his apprehension, he speaks of it with the utmost calmness and composure of mind, *I am now ready to be offer'd.* He had no reluctance, but the highest satisfaction, in the prospect of his approaching dissolution; and whilst he had every thing which was terrible to expect, from the known cruelty of a bloody tyrant; he well knew that he could only kill the body; that he could not restrain comfort from his soul in death, nor deprive him of a crown of righteousness after it. He had before been * *in a strait, desiring to depart, and be with Christ.* And now the happy moment is approaching, he lifts up his head with

* Phil. i. 23.

with joy; and the rather, as he was to be offer'd* upon the sacrifice and service of the faith of the Church; and thus Christ would be magnified by his death, as he had been by his life.

AND as his great Lord and Master, in the view † of the joy which was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame; the apostle was enabled to look within the veil, and saw the bright immortal crown laid up for, and ready to be bestow'd upon him. And of this he speaks in terms of full assurance: *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.* I see it, I know it is mine; God is faithful; it is due to the righteousness of my Redeemer, and stands connected by gracious engagements with evangelical integrity. And lest any should be tempted to think this was confin'd to apostles, confessors, or martyrs, he sweetly adds, *Not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing;* that is, to every good man in the world, every believer and lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, who can think of his appearing with pleasure, long for it as a most desirable blessing, and is looking out after it with his loins girt, and his lamp burning.

THE words thus explain'd may be consider'd as applicable to saints in general, or to ministers of the gospel in particular. They are all servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, engaged in one common warfare, have the same enemies for

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* Phil. ii. 17.

† Heb. xii. 2.

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the most part to contend with, and shall triumph together in a crown of righteousness. But, as I apprehend, the apostle is here speaking rather in the character of a *minister*, than of a *private christian*; I shall chiefly trace him in that view, after I have offer'd a few thoughts as to the more general application of it.

IF we then consider the words in their reference to believers in common, we may observe,

I. A metaphorical description of the christian life. It is compared to a *warfare*, and a *race*: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course*, or come to the end of my race.

EVERY Child of God whilst in this world is in a state of service and conflict, he has much work to do and many enemies to oppose. It must be granted that the cause he is engaged in is truly honourable, he serves under the most wise, powerful, compassionate, and glorious commander, has armour compleat and of proof provided for him; stands insured of cloathing, provision, instruction, encouragement, and protection; yea, what is peculiar to this warfare, in the end he shall be * *a conqueror*, and more than so, through *him that loves him*. But this by no means exempts, but rather obliges him to endure hardship as a good soldier; he will be often called to strive even unto agony, as the word in our text signifies, when opposing his

* Rom. viii. 37.

his own corruptions, the snares of the world and the temptations of the devil. He will find no time for idleness or sleep, must never be off his watch; his enemies are many, powerful, malicious and vigilant; he must be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; never without the *sword of the spirit* and the *shield of faith*, fighting valiantly the Lord's battles, 'till he receives his discharge. He may depend on the care of a faithful God, who will *keep him by his mighty power, through faith, unto salvation*; but the hand which cannot *destroy* may grievously *wound* him, and as a chastisement of presumption or carelessness, he may carry the scars of the wounds received from his enemy, with distress and dishonour, to the grave.

THE other branch of the figurative description is that of a *race* or *course*, a service which calls for strength, agility, application, and constancy. The preparation for the christian race is the renewing grace of God; 'till this is received, we have no spiritual knowledge of it; no inclination to it, or ability to take a single step in it; the rules of running are laid down in the word of God: *The life we are to live in the flesh is by the faith of his Son*; and from a grateful sense of our obligations to forgiving love, we are to run in the path of his commandments, that is, faithfully and chearfully discharge every duty; and by * *a patient continu-*

* Rom. ii. 7.

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ance in well doing, seek for glory, immortality, and eternal life. In this race there is no room for loitering or indolence; when we enter upon it, we are not so much as to look back; but, with all eagerness, * forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, to press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And if we wish to speed in the christian course, we must be daily earnest with God for grace to enable us to † lay aside every weight, and the sins which do more easily beset us, that we may have nothing to retard our motion, but ‡ so run as to obtain, || so fight as to lay hold of eternal life.

II. IT is the duty and interest of every believer, stedfastly to adhere to the faith once delivered unto the saints; *I have kept the faith.* By faith here the apostle is not to be understood, as speaking of his own integrity or faithfulness; that he had been an honest man and kept his word, nor of the grace of faith, as to the habit or exercise of it; for though these were found with him and abounded, they were not of his own production or preservation. By the grace of God he was what he was; Christ was the author, maintainer, and was to be the finisher of his faith. By faith then he certainly intends the doctrine and profession of faith, which, as a Saint as well as a Minister, he had closely

* Phil. iii. 13, 14.

† Heb. xii. 1.

‡ 1 Cor. ix. 24.

|| 1 Tim. vi. 12.

closely adhered to. And as it is a matter of the greatest importance to every private christian, we are all required to keep the faith; we should be concerned to know *what* it is, and for this we are to pray to the Spirit for his illumination, and carefully to examine and search the scriptures, remembering that it is *faith* not *demonstration* we are in pursuit of. That if the matter of a truth lies plainly before us, and we have satisfactory evidence that it is contained in the divine revelation; though the mode or manner may be concealed, or some difficulties present themselves, which we cannot readily get over; we are called in the obedience of faith to receive it, on the testimony of God, waiting his time to withdraw the veil; or more to spiritualize, enlarge, and strengthen our capacity.

AND here we may admire and adore the wisdom and grace of God, that truths of the greatest concern, and in which we are deeply interested, are wrote as with a sun beam in the scriptures of truth. Thus the object of religious worship is expressly described as the one only living and true God, and this God is said to be Father, Son, and Spirit; our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, whose adorable names are invoked in the ordinance of baptism, and the apostolic benediction. Again, *salvation*, the most needful and valuable blessing, is ascribed to God, said to be of *grace* through Jesus the one mediator between God and man. In

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*this saviour we have * redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, he † gave his life a ransom for us, and is ‡ set forth as a propitiation; he is our prophet, priest, and king, our head, our advocate, our husband and our judge. And as to holiness, that necessary preparation for happiness, we are told, that || except a man be born again he shall not see the kingdom of God. And as § many as are the sons of God, are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; and ¶ that it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. We *** are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works: and may be †† confident that where he begins the good work, he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. And the assurance is express, Christ's §§ sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands. They shall be upheld by his mighty power; and when duly fitted for it, shall possess a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

THESE and all other truths of the gospel are to be received and entertained with all readiness. The authority of the revealer should silence every cavil; God is *truth*, and cannot deceive us. And ||| *he that believeth not his record, makes him a liar.*

MOREOVER,

* Eph. i. 7.

† Matth. xx. 28.

‡ Rom. iii. 25.

|| John iii. 3.

§ John i. 12, 13.

¶ Phil. ii. 13.

*** Eph. ii. 13.

†† Phil. i. 6.

§§ John x. 28.

||| John v. 10.

MOREOVER, as we are carefully to watch, that we have the *very faith once delivered to the saints*; so we are to *keep it*, as we have received it, entire, without any mixtures or additions of man's invention. We are to *hold fast the form of sound words*, and the *profession* we have made of it without wavering.

III. WHATEVER difficulties may attend the christian in his spiritual warfare, he will sooner or later see reason to pronounce it *good*. *I have fought a good fight*.

FLESH and Blood are not to be consulted, much less the gratification of remaining corruption. These are to be opposed, denied, and crucified, let the pain be as the plucking out of the eye, or cutting off the right hand. In the severest instances of mortification, wisdom will be justified of her children. Whatever the world may think, the saint shall find Christ's *yoke is easy*, and his *burden light*. When the light of God's countenance shines on the soul, in the plain path of appointed duty, the believer will bravely march over relations, interest, friendship, and every thing which would oppose him in the service of the Lord. He counts nothing too dear to part with for his sake, and values one smile from his Master, as an over-balance for all the frowns of the world. His work brings its wages; *† wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*.

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HE has tried the bewitching pleasures of sin, and found them vain and bitter; meets with solid satisfaction in a life of faith and holiness. In the forest exercises he has a *friend* to go to, has many exceeding great and precious promises to live upon; and the certainty of overcoming by the blood of the Lamb, animates him to the combat, and encourages to perseverance. Strangers may doubt, and the prophane deride, but every good man hath the witness within himself; he well knows, that *in * keeping God's commandments there is a great reward*. And who can describe the joy which attends an humble reflection on gospel-integrity in the views of death? To be able to say we know that our *Redeemer lives*; and, whilst mourning over our manifold imperfections, to have the testimony of a good conscience, that we have not *denied the faith*, or *wickedly departed from our God*; that we were enabled to set out right, and hold on our way, looking to Jesus; that we have not been ashamed of Christ, nor in any remarkable instance a shame to him: this will be matter of joy and thankfulness. The believer well knows the *foundation* of his hope; and, renouncing all dependence on frame and duty, goes out of the world, praising God who has *made and kept him faithful*; which leads me to observe,

IV. WHEN the saint quits the field, he divides the spoil; when he reaches the goal, he receives

* Psalm xix. 11.

receives his crown: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous Judge will give to me; and not to me only, but unto all those also who love his appearing.

A CROWN! it's a term full of dignity, prepared of old to adorn the head of every conqueror; I say, prepared; for it's the fruit of everlasting love, laid out in the councils of a sovereign, unchanging God; purchas'd by the righteousness, *i. e.* the obedience and sufferings of the *Great Emanuel*, held out in the promise, often viewed by faith, and at length conferr'd by the righteous Judge. You observe the expression, it is *given*, not *deserv'd*, much less seiz'd or usurp'd: *Grace*, unmerited *Grace*, provides, reveals, and bestows it. Say then, believer, hast thou any reason to repent thy choice, desert thy Master, or faint and be weary of his service? Remember past experiences, how sweetly thou hast *tasted that the Lord is gracious*; lift up thy head, look forward; thy salvation, the immortal crown, is at hand; a few conflicts more, and victory shall be proclaim'd, and an *† abundant entrance* be administer'd to thee into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

HAVING thus consider'd the words as applicable to saints in general, we shall now attend to

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to them in their peculiar reference to ministers of the gospel.

NOT that we would be understood as attempting to run a parallel. The apostle was a man fill'd with grace, and abounding with zeal perhaps much beyond any in his own day, or ever since. The faith, the warfare, and the crown, however, are the same in every age; and, admitting a vast disparity between this *shining seraph* and succeeding ministers, the substance of what he here declares, every faithful ambassador of Christ can in his measure set his seal to. They are all called to *fight a good fight*, to *keep the faith*, and may hope for a *crown of righteousness* from the chief Shepherd. And in this view of the words we may observe,

1. A TRUST committed, and faithfully discharged: *I have kept the faith.*

2. A CONFLICT pursued, and happily concluded: *I have fought a good fight.*

3. A PEACEFUL reflection on both, in the views of death: *I am now ready to be offer'd, &c.*

4. A PROSPECT, with an elevation of joy, of an *unfading crown*: *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c.*

I. A TRUST committed, and faithfully discharged: *I have kept the faith.*

By *faith* here, we are to understand that *faith* which the apostle had † *preach'd*, and which *he once* would have *destroy'd*; against which his mind, during his ignorance and unbelief, was full of almost invincible prejudice, even to rage and malice; so that there seemed to be a kind of necessity of a supernatural revelation to engage him to receive it. And of this he speaks with the utmost gratitude, when writing to the saints in *Galatia*, he says, * *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me, is not after man. For I neither receiv'd it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. And when it pleased God, who called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferr'd not with flesh and blood, &c.* In this most extraordinary manner the apostle came acquainted with the faith, and receiving a special commission from our Lord Jesus Christ, *he ‡ was put into the ministry*; and, as he says to *Timothy*, *the glorious gospel of the blessed God was committed to his trust.* How he discharged this trust, is evident from the history of his conduct; the main business of his life was to preach *the unfearchable riches of Christ.* This he did with all faithfulness, resolution, and plainness in

every
† Gal. i. 23. * Gal. i. 11, 12, 15, 16. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 11, 12.

every place, and on every occasion. So he says to the saints at *Corinth*, * *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: For I determin'd not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. And in his second epistle he observes, † Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not: but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord. And elsewhere he says, || We are not as many who corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.* Accordingly when taking his last farewell of the elders of the church at *Ephesus*, the apostle could cheerfully appeal to them ‡, *Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility, &c. and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you and have taught*

* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2, 4, 5.

† 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2, 5.

|| 2 Cor. ii. 17.

‡ Acts xx. 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27.

*you publickly, and from house to house; testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Thus he most faithfully and zealously preached the gospel himself, and where-ever he discovered any opposition to, or defection from it, he immediately appears in its defence. Are the Galatians in danger of being drawn aside from the truth? the apostle tells them, that, though * he, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, than that which he had preached unto them, let him be accursed; and for their caution repeats it, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed.— Is he afraid of false brethren, or gives place to them by subjection? No, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with the church. And if Peter, whom he heartily loved, and highly honoured, is to blame, he withstands him to the face, and reproves him before all the brethren. And we may form a judgment of the apostle's concern to keep the faith, from his advice to others: he beseeches Timothy to † abide at Ephesus, that he might charge some that they taught no other doctrine: charges ‡ him to war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience; encourages him to be a || good minister of Jesus Christ,*

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* Gal. i. 9.
|| 1 Tim. i. 4, 6.

† 1 Tim. i. 3.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 18, 19.

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*nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine; bids him take * heed to himself and to his doctrine, and warns him of those who † taught otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness. And in his second epistle he exhorts him, to ‡ hold fast the form of sound words, which he had heard of him in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus; to || watch in all things, to do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of his ministry.*

AND in his advice to Titus, as an essential in the character of a bishop or pastor, he mentions his ¶ holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort, and to convince gainsayers. And as to the personal behaviour of Titus, he directs, that in all § things he should shew himself a pattern of good works; in doctrine uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned. Thus did he labour with his whole might to keep the faith himself, and that it might be preserved pure and unmixed in all the churches. He well knew he was a steward ** of the mysteries of God, and that it is required of stewards to be faithful.

2. WE

* 1 Tim. iv. 16.

† Chap. vi. 3, 4.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 13.

|| Chap. iv. 5.

¶ 1 Tit. i. 9, 6.

§ Chap. ii. 7, 8.

** 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

2. WE have an account of the conflict he endured, and the race he had run; *I have fought a good fight, and finished my course.*

MINISTERS of Christ are set for the defence of the gospel, and whoever may find an easy passage through this world, they are to look for difficulties and opposition, and that

1. FROM the remains of *unbelief* and *carnality* in their own minds.

THE best are renewed but in part, and are never secure whilst in this world from the vanity and treachery of their own hearts. Learned ministers, men of great capacity, improved by a blessing on a close application to their studies, sometimes find great resistance from the remains of pride, and are not always easily brought to be as *fools for Christ*. To study as if there was no *assistance*, and depend as if we had never *studied*, is no easy attainment; to preach to the capacities of the most illiterate, and make conscience of our method and language, that we may take our hearers along with us, will to men of a distinguished genius call for a degree of self-denial. To see the pleasures of the Lord prosper in our hands, and a growing interest in the affection of the people, to receive their acknowledgments in the warm expressions of affection without a guilty glow of self applause; where is the servant of the Lord who is always equal to it? and where

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it is the pleasure of God to deny a blessing to our prayers and labours, and *Israel is not gathered*. To see an auditory dropping off, and a church dying on our hands, without sinful regret, quarrelling with God, or *envying* our brother, I persuade myself is hard work to a minister who loves the interest of Christ, and would esteem it his highest honour to be useful to the souls of men. But were there no temptations of this kind, ministers have a body of sin; a law contradicting, or warring against the law of their minds, as well as others. *Paul* himself groan'd under a sense of it, and earnestly cried out for deliverance. And who of the servants of Christ in the gospel can plead an exemption? Hence a sad reluctance to spiritual exercises, strange embarrassment in the discharge of them; what covetous, polluted, or angry images thrust themselves upon us at times, in the most solemn acts of devotion; and from the remaining disorder of our spirits, how are we ready to give up all, and cease to pursue our master's work, least *when we have preached to others, we ourselves should be cast-aways*, or disapproved.

2. MINISTERS, especially those who are most zealous and faithful, are to expect the assaults of satan, and the worst of usage from his instruments. The enemy will lay every bait to ensnare them, as to principle and practice; he will try every method to make them renounce, corrupt, or conceal the truth; and do
all

all he can to cause them to disgrace it, by an unguarded conversation.

THE men of the world will hate, reproach, and persecute them; take all advantages of their miscarriages, and labour to make them odious by lies and defamation. And what is more surprising, and to a godly Minister much more distressing, satan is sometimes suffer'd to stir up good men against him. *Job's* friends little thought they were doing the devil's work, in charging the good man with hypocrisy. And, it's observable, this went very near him; he bears the loss of his estate and children with unparallel'd heroism: * *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord:* but when his mistaken friends load him with the charge of secret villany, he presently loses all patience, and groaning bitterly under the undeserved censure, is almost tempted to quarrel with God, that he did not immediately appear in his vindication ||. And though the apostle *Paul* had the mercy of a general esteem in the churches, we find he did not escape reproach; he speaks of himself as † *despis'd and defam'd*, as well as *revil'd, persecuted,*

* *Job* i. 21.

|| HERE I cannot help observing, where ministers, or private christians agree in the *fundamental* principles of the gospel, and are heartily concerned for the *honour* of the *Redeemer* in the order and discipline of his house and purity of conversation; it is pity, great pity they should fall out by the way, and in doubtful matters give into a private spirit, so far as to unchurch or unchristian one another.

† *1 Cor.* iv. 10, 12, 13.

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secuted, made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things.

NOR let any ambassador of Christ look for better treatment; the servant is not above his master. If these things were done to him, and he held on his way with application and constancy, let us remember we are not to quit the field, though the arrows of the enemy may fly thick about us. Nothing but a discharge from our Captain will warrant the laying down of our arms; and let every upright, tried Servant of the Lord embrace the promise, and attend to the exhortation; * *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Which leads me

3. To observe, a peaceful reflection on the warfare the apostle had been engaged in; *I have fought a good fight.* This was a conclusion upon deliberation and judgment; he well knew what he had lost for Christ, what labour and trials attended his service; and upon the whole, he declares it was *good*, yea very *good*; pleasure, honour and profit attended every part of his work. He loved Christ, and delighted to plead for him with sinners, to recommend him to saints, and to vindicate him, his truth and interest, in the face of all opposition. He found his grace sufficient for him; and whilst he was publishing his glories to others, had
soul-

* Rev. ii. 10.

soul-ravishing assurances, that * *he loved him, and gave himself for him.* And with what joy of mind must he see satan falling every day before him, numbers of his vassals brought to the obedience of faith, and believers every-where refresh'd and establish'd; and though we cannot expect his extraordinary furniture, assistance and success, I presume every minister of Christ will find reason to speak well of his name. Have we not sometimes met with unexpected enlargements in our private meditations, and public ministrations? How has the Lord open'd our understanding when musing on his word? What incomes of light and love, when we have been searching into, or bringing out the enriching treasures of instruction and comfort contained in it? And, under all the discouragements of a base heart, tempting enemies, and an ensnaring world, how sweet and enlivening the promise, † *Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world?* If God has crown'd our labour with any success, though but in a single instance; it must outweigh, when duly consider'd, all the fatigues and sorrows of the present service: and, as to our spiritual enemies, the servant of the Lord may sometimes be foil'd, he may be carried away by the carnality of his own heart, and fall in an hour of temptation; but he who holds his stars in his right hand will pray for, help, and recover them, and, by making them more humble and watchful for
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* Gal. ii. 20.

† Matth. xxviii. 20.

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the time to come, bring good out of evil. But besides this, the faithful servants of Christ in the ministry have a good in *hope*, as well as in *hand*. Which leads me,

Lastly, To observe the joyful prospect of a *Crown*: *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*. The apostle speaks of it with an air of transport, it is a *crown*, and secured for me. The allusion is evidently to those wreaths, or garlands, which were given to conquerors, in the games which were then in use; and, together with the bliss and glory which shall be conferr'd on *all* the redeemed of the Lord, I humbly apprehend that *faithful ministers* will have an honourable attestation of their fidelity and industry in the work they are called to, every reproach on their persons and work will be done away, their enemies for Christ and the gospel sake shall hide their heads, and their mistaken friends rejoice in their approv'd integrity. And to this will be added the distinguishing honour of being instrumental in bringing in the elect, and building up the body of Christ. They are now * *their brethren, dearly belov'd, and long'd for*, and will then be *their joy and crown*. Hence the apostle with his usual pathos, writing to the saints in *Thessalonica*, says, || *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing, or glorying? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*

* Phil. iv. 1.

|| 1 Thes. ii. 19, 20.

coming? And, as if he could not say enough of it, adds, *For ye are our glory and hope.*

IT is most certain, the *principal* triumph of the day, will be to see Jesus in his glory, the execution of the divine counsels in our compleat and everlasting salvation; that we are cloathed with the righteousness of the Son of God, and as friends of the bridegroom placed at his right hand; but may it not be an improvement of the heavenly joy to hear our great Lord say to us, as *ministers*, *well done good and faithful servants ye have been faithful in a few things, I will make ye rulers over many, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.* This we are sure of, that *they * that be wise*, or as some render it, *who are teachers*, *shall shine as the brightness of the firmament*, and *they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.* And that the † *Elders who feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; who are not as lords over God's heritage, but ensamples to the flock: when the chief shepherd shall appear they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

THUS we have considered the words as applicable to every believer, and in their especial reference to the servants of God in the ministry. From what has been said we infer:

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* Dan. xii. 3. † 1 Pet. v. 1, 3, 4.

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I. THE great importance of a steady adherence to, and constant open profession of the faith, once delivered to the saints. Ministers and people are to *keep the faith*, and when called to contend for it, if they are enabled to do it in a good spirit, they are to fight the good fight of faith, and not be ashamed of the gospel, or afraid of the faces of men.

It is one of satan's artifices to work men up to an indifference about religious principles. Be assured, without a competent knowledge of the gospel there can be no grace in the heart, or fruitfulness in the life: and what we have received of the Lord we are to keep and hold fast; this is our duty now, and will be our comfort and glory hereafter. That "doctrine, (says the late
"excellent Mr. *Hill**, at the ordination of a
"minister) which lays the creature low, which
"exalts free grace, and promotes holiness,
"esteem every line of it precious. The faith
"of the gospel is worth striving for, because it
"is the food of your own and others souls;
" 'tis the foundation on which we build for
"eternity. The springs of our spiritual life
"are gone, our strength for duty, our hope of
"glory, if Christ be not God; if justification
"be not of grace; if we are not chosen to salvation as the end, and sanctification as the
"means. And as chosen by sovereign grace,
"if we are not kept by almighty power.
- Deny

* See his posthumous Sermons, page 211.

“ Deny the importance of these, or any other
 “ gospel truth, and it is the same as if you
 “ disbelieve the truth itself. That is not worth
 “ having, which is not worth owning.” Thus
 that judicious and evangelical Divine. A noble
 expression of his zeal for the gospel of salva-
 tion !

2. A LIFE of indolence and inactivity will
 assuredly end in shame. Spiritual knowledge
 and the grace of God always quicken to duty.
 The *slothful servant* may dream of happiness;
 but if he wastes his time and talents, the Judge
 has already pronounced his doom; * *Cast the*
unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there
shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.—It is not
 the enjoying the means of grace, and a general
 profession as christians; nor the pompous titles
 and emoluments which are given to any in the
 character of ministers, that will excuse our care-
 lessness, and exempt us from punishment. We
 are called to work in the strength of the Lord
 in our different capacities, to run the christian
 race, to fight against every enemy; and this
 we must do with unwearied diligence, 'till we
 finish our course; always remembering that the
 acceptance of our persons and services is in Je-
 sus the beloved.

3. NEXT to the sealings of the Spirit of
 God, no *melody* like the testimony of a good
 E 2 consci-

* Matth. xxv. 30.

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conscience. This is a perpetual feast, beyond the reach of every enemy. This carries the faint above every reproach, and is a very comfortable ingredient in his peace in a dying hour. It must be granted there is no man lives without sin, and the best are always most sensible of their imperfections; but these when disallow'd, mourn'd over, and strove against, are not inconsistent with habitual sincerity. There's a vast deal of difference between a conscience charging us with *hypocrisy*, and the *love of sin*, and an heart bleeding over particular *miscarriages*. "Come then, O my soul, enquire, *carefully* enquire, how is it with thee? Dost thou chuse the fear of the Lord, and desire to hate every evil way? Hast thou seen the want and worth of the glorious Saviour? Hast thou committed thyself into his hands? Fled for refuge to him? Praying for his Spirit to quicken, guide and sanctify thee? Hast thou a witness within thyself, that God in Christ is thy chief Good, thy chosen portion, and heaven long'd for as a place of holiness?" If so, bless God for the mercy, and expect to find the peace of it in the views of death.

Lastly, WHEN we are called to part with godly relations, or useful ministers, let us not sorrow as those who are without hope, but consider the *manner* and *end* of their *conversation*: * *for them to live was Christ, and to die*

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* Phil. i. 21.

is gain. Their warfare and race are over, they have reached the goal, rest from their labours, and possess the crown. God had nothing more to do by them in our world, and they are happy beyond our warmest wishes in a better. This, we have no reason to doubt, is the mercy of your late honoured pastor, of whom I have a few things to say to the honour of the grace of God, and for our instruction, who are to be † *followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promise.*

THE late reverend Mr. *George Braithwaite* was born in the year 1681, at *Fornacefells* in *Lancashire*. His parents, and all his relations, were zealous for the church as by law establish'd; and from his infancy they devoted him to the ministry, hoping that he might succeed an uncle of his, who was a celebrated preacher in that country. With this view he was sent to grammar learning, first in that neighbourhood, and afterwards at one of the most famous schools in *Yorkshire*, where he tarry'd 'till it was thought proper to send him to the university; where attending to the several lectures and academical exercises, and prosecuting his studies with all diligence, he took up his || degree; and soon after, to his great uneasiness, was forced away by some circumstances attending his family: a near relation being thought to be a dying, he was hasten'd home, and had no

oppor-

† Heb. vi. 12.

|| Of Master of Arts.

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opportunity of returning. Thus he had the advantage of a liberal education; but what was of much greater consequence to himself and the church, he was *early* called by the grace of God; and having received light into the ordinance of believers baptism whilst a youth, before he knew that there were any of that profession in the world, he now soon determin'd to join himself to a * Church of that communion; which accordingly he did in the year 1706; where, after a profession of his faith, with an account of his experience, on his being baptiz'd, he was receiv'd into full communion, and continued to walk honourably with them, 'till God in his providence called him to another part of his vineyard. In the church to which he first gave up his name, his gift for the ministry was tried and approv'd; and after solemn fasting and prayer, he was recommended by them to the great work of preaching the everlasting gospel.

ABOUT this time he had great offers from his relations and friends, who were earnestly solicitous that he would settle in the church of *England*; but this not being agreeable to his judgment, he chearfully sacrificed all outward advantages to the honour of Christ, and the peace of his own conscience. And as he had formerly determin'd, that if God should call him

* Then under the care of Mr. *David Crossley*; now under the Reverend Mr. *Brine*, near *Cripplegate*, in the city of *London*.

him by his grace, and put him into the ministry, he would devote the *first fruits* of his labours to the service of the poor ignorant people among whom he was born: He accordingly went and preached in *Lancashire*, where he soon, under a divine blessing, gathered a church, and for some time went on very comfortably. At length a difference arising about the *terms* of communion, a separation became necessary. And here he was enabled to conduct himself with that truly christian spirit, that though he could not tarry with them, he generously confirm'd to them, and their successors for ever, the *place of worship, burying-ground, and baptistery*, all out of his own estate: all which they comfortably enjoy to this day. After this he was called to *Bridlington* in *Yorkshire*, where he continued several years with reputation and success; and, in all probability, had ended his days there, had not his zeal against prevailing * intemperance render'd his situation uneasy. This being known, he was invited by you to take the pastoral charge of you; which he consented to, and continued with you to the time of his death.

His ministry among you was sound, plain, and affectionate, and was held in good esteem by many of the churches among whom he occasionally labour'd. He had a remarkable gift
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* He publish'd a small treatise against unnecessary frequenting public houses, which gave great offence.

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in prayer, and commonly carried out with a *vehemence* of language expressive of holy importunity, which some have judg'd detrimental to his constitution. He was enabled to maintain a very close walk with God, as is evident from the exact account he took of the frame of his spirit in the closet, the family, and the world, for two and thirty years together. Here I might transcribe at large the breathings and complaints, the dependance and consolations of his truly pious mind; but I know he chose they shou'd be conceal'd, and therefore I forbear.

HIS conversation, many of you know, was *friendly, affable, and courteous*; and, I may safely add, the good man watched for every opportunity to introduce something spiritual, and tending to edification. He often complained of the natural *warmth* of his spirit, and when it got the better of him, though under the most irritating provocations, no man more ready to grieve over, and acknowledge it.

HIS circumstances in life were formerly easy and plentiful, and then no man more given to hospitality; but, as is often the case with dissenting ministers, a *large family*, and an income very disproportionate to its supply, gradually reduc'd him. Thus was he called to *spend*, as well as be *spent* in his Master's service. In the latter part of his life he met with many
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